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## CD REVIEWS

BRIAN FERNEYHOUGH: *Shadowtime*. Nicolas Hodges (pno, speaker), Mats Scheidegger (gtr), Neue Vokalsolisten Stuttgart, Nieuw Ensemble, c. Jurjen Hempel. NMC D123 (2-CD set).

Brian Ferneyhough has written that his opera *Shadowtime* 'takes as its starting point the suicide and imagined descent into the underworld of the German theorist and writer Walter Benjamin'. However, since he is 'not interested in either the development of opera or the evolution of its conventions', he has 'tried to do something not usually attempted in opera – and especially not now – and that is to explore issues of morality and social conditions'. At first glance, this is a questionable statement: don't *Wozzeck*, *Peter Grimes* and a good many other operas or dramatic works, including those by Steve Reich and John Adams, explore such issues? But what Ferneyhough probably means is that other operas don't attempt his Benjamin-inspired version of allegory, the intransigent contention that, in an allegory (as the Benjamin-authority Graeme Gilloch puts it) 'the meaning of the subject is torn apart'.

Ferneyhough is not interested 'in representing individuals according to established rules of characterisation': nevertheless, he admits to finding Benjamin 'particularly sympathetic', partly on account of his 'richly chaotic' personality, whose philosophical and aesthetic concerns make him 'the archetypal intellectual of his time'. Benjamin actually appears in two of the opera's seven scenes, though less as a character, still less a 'hero', than as the subject of a process in which that descent into the underworld – the myth of death and time (life) as exceeding human understanding – is explored, but not in any sense resolved. For Benjamin as allegorist, again according to Gilloch, 'the world never appears as a legible totality, but always instead as an irresolvable puzzle'. *Shadowtime* has similar attributes.

The result of Ferneyhough's ten-year Benjamin project was first seen in May 2004 at the Munich Biennale in a production that aroused mixed responses. In these pages (*Tempo* No. 230, October 2004, pp.53–5), Graham Lack outlined the case for the prosecution as far as the production was concerned, and many of his points are well taken, though I was less incensed by the overall approach than he was. The Munich production seemed to

me to be, in essence, true to the work's extraordinary range – bitterly, naturalistically self-destructive at one extreme, seeking out a kind of rapt, stylized, stability at the other. I was certainly looking forward to seeing the production again in London in July 2005, and it was a disappointment when the planned Sadlers Wells staging was cancelled and replaced by a concert performance at the Coliseum, the source of this 2-CD set.

This change had obvious consequences for the recording. To some extent, I suppose, the almost complete lack of movement, or action, brought performance conditions closer to those of a recording studio, although a studio recording might have used quite different set-ups to cope with the very varied forces used in each of the scenes. Under different conditions, the solo guitar in Scene 2 and the solo piano in Scene 4 might have been given better positions within the overall sound configuration. On the whole, nevertheless, I think that listening to these discs provides a pretty good reconstruction of the experience in the Coliseum, if not of that in Munich's Prinzregententheater. By July 2005 the performers were well-practised at pacing themselves against the work's testing demands, with only occasional signs of strain in the very high soprano lines. And the deal between NMC and the BBC has probably helped to make the set available much sooner than might otherwise have been the case.

The main cause for regret is that NMC were not able to include Charles Bernstein's teasingly intricate libretto (with a flair for punning unmatched since Stephen Pruslin's *Punch and Judy*) in the booklet. Details of how the text can be obtained via a *Shadowtime* website are provided, but it was distributed free with the programme at the Coliseum performance, and offers an enormous boost to comprehension, even when particular segments, usually in layered, overlapping textures, are not audible. Nevertheless, comprehension doesn't come easily, even with the text; it will always be difficult for most opera-goers to join the austere sect that welcomes the chance to elevate ideas above character so determinedly. This 'richly chaotic' Benjamin is not celebrated by Ferneyhough as a tragic figure driven to despair and/or suicide by a set of circumstances which his intellectual powers

(his personality) made him specially unable to cope with. But perhaps there are enough operas about characters like that already?

From the composer's own perspective, therefore, it might be as irrelevant to attempt to align his opera with the genre's humanistic mainstream as it is, for some, to feel compassion for the sacrificial victim in the final dance of *The Rite of Spring*. But can we consider how *Shadowtime* 'explores issues of morality and social conditions' without mediating between ideas – philosophy – and character-psychology? Perhaps we can make a start by way of the work's starkest contrast, between the last two scenes. In the first (Scene 6) an individual assumes the guise of a demented lecturer (a distracted philosopher?) who can only speak – not sing – by way of parody and word play, and whose final conundrum homes in not so obliquely on the matter of meaning: 'Who's to say, what's to say/Whether what is is not/Or whether what is is so because/is so because it's not'. Then the lecturer exits, gesturing madly, talking to himself – a feature of the original production which Nicolas Hodges was able to preserve in the London performance.

So much for the collapse of the unbridled intellect, to the point where furious feelings outlive verbal expression. At first the orchestral conclusion to Scene 6 ups the unstable, mocking ante. But eventually the mood changes, to prepare the final scene, 'Stelae for Failed Time (Solo for Melancholia as the Angel of History)'. The text of this extended lament is not devoid of all personal qualities – two strands refer to such human activities as touching and holding – and against the background of the composer's voice manipulated to provide a recurring, grounding, tolling sound (a resonance with Act 3 of Birtwistle's *The Mask of Orpheus*) the choral writing can suggest, not just 'an evocation of one of Benjamin's central concerns, the radical break with historical time into "now" time', as Bernstein sums it up in his notes, but the connexion between thinking and feeling: as if to compensate for the terrible, ultimate disjunction of factors which drove Benjamin to his death.

As Fabrice Fitch writes in his admirable booklet essay, useful to those who have seen the opera as well as to those who haven't, '*Shadowtime* is ultimately an opera of catastrophe'. Yet not even 'the opera's ultimately pessimistic conclusion' can 'exclude music of great refinement and poetic allusiveness'. To the extent that *Shadowtime* conforms to the principle that no worthwhile work of art will make an entirely negative impression, those qualities of refinement and allusiveness serve as reminders of human

agencies, and of human qualities that artists – especially those concerned with 'issues of morality and social conditions' – forget at their peril. To react in this way is clearly to risk forsaking allegory for reality (verismo?), out of nostalgia for a 'legible totality', that unified world which Benjamin explicitly resisted. Ferneyhough's ending is at the opposite extreme from the depicted deaths of Verdi's *Otello*, Berg's *Wozzeck*, or Britten's *Gustav von Aschenbach*. Yet what is real about it, and powerfully conveyed in this performance, is a lament for lost, or wasted time, lost, or wasted lives; a lament to which only sentient humans can give voice.

Arnold Whittall

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BARRY: *The Intelligence Park*. Richard Jackson (bass bar), Paul Harby (ten), Sephen Richardson (bass), Angela Tunstall (sop), Nicholas Clapton (counter-ten), Buddug Verona James (contralto), Almeida Ensemble c. Robert Houlihan. NMC D122

Gerald Barry's first opera took nearly a decade to write and has taken even longer to emerge on CD. This NMC release of *The Intelligence Park* uses the BBC broadcast recording of the original 1990 Almeida Opera production – a second production is still awaited – and was timed to coincide with Barry's *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* at ENO in the autumn of 2005.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the composer, *The Intelligence Park* is an uncompromisingly eccentric piece and listening to it on CD can be a baffling experience. It is also an exhilarating and compelling one. Barry says in his sleeve notes that he does not 'like texts which are bound by logic or plot,' preferring 'coolness and a bizarre artificiality which allow extreme careering at tangents.' In these terms Vincent Deane's libretto serves his needs. It is rich in historical and operatic texture, if short on comprehensibility.

The convoluted plot is set in Dublin in 1753 and concerns a composer, Paradies, who has writer's block over his new opera. His fiancée abandons him for the castrato Serafino, with whom Paradies has become obsessed. In a burst of furious inspiration he casts the two as thinly-disguised characters in his opera, who begin to interact with their real-life *alter egos*. Paradies descends into madness as his creations take control of him, and the final act fractures into scenes of unreality and hysteria.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wittingly or not, the plot curiously resembles that of Franz Schreker's *Christophorus oder 'Die Vision einer Oper'* – Ed.

Although set in the 18th century, the music uses no pastiche or found material, though there are nods towards the closed forms of Baroque opera. Primarily the music firmly attests to Barry's empiric, undogmatic approach to composing. He said he had 'no pre-set plan or way of working' in the opera and this is both a strength and weakness: for all the spontaneity and endless invention in the music, there is often a lack of focus and direction in the action.

The singing is impressive; vocal lines are challenging, athletic rather than mellifluous, often very high and requiring sharp characterization. Richard Jackson (Paradies) is excellent but Stephen Richardson, as Paradies' would-be father-in-law, is the most memorable performance. The playing by the Almeida Ensemble is astonishing throughout, and especially in Act II; in many ways the instrumental interludes are the highlight of the disc.

In an interview Gerald Barry said he wanted the opera to be 'both concrete and enigmatic' and this is a very good description of its overall effect: assertive music which never quite reveals what it is asserting.

Bernard Hughes

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BEN JOHNSTON: *String Quartets Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 9. The Kepler Quartet.* New World Records 80637-2.

MARTIN BRESNICK: *My Twentieth Century.* Robert Van Slice, Kunihiko Komori, Izumi Sinfonietta Osaka c. Norichika Iimori; Taimur Sullivan, Maya Beiser, Steven Schick, Povera Players. New World 80635-2.

JULIUS EASTMAN: *Unjust Malaise.* The Creative Associates at SUNY Buffalo, New Music America, Julius Eastman, Frank Ferko, Janet Kattas, Patricia Martin. New World 80638-2 (3-CD set).

KYLE GANN: *Long Night.* Sarah Cahill (pnos). Cold Blue CB0019.

The company of American composers includes some number who, even though they might be justly described as legendary, are much more likely to have been heard of than to have been heard. Ben Johnston, a case in point, is fairly well known as a disciple of Harry Partch and as a composer of microtonal music. There are different kinds of microtonal music. Unlike Ezra Sims, another prominent American microtonal composer, whose music is concerned with a fully quasi-chromatic, essentially tonal, language, with leading tones that lead more than usual, Johnston's concerns are with just intonation: thus

a purely tuned, essentially diatonic, modal music, featuring pure intervals, with no beats, which are equivalent to the intervals in the harmonic series. With the disc listed above, the Kepler Quartet is initiating recordings of all ten of Johnston's string quartets.

It was almost ten years after his apprenticeship with Partch before Johnston wrote his first microtonal piece, his Sonata for Microtonal Piano, 1960–64. His String Quartet No 2, written in 1964, which was the next piece he wrote, is the earliest work on this disc. The quartet is based on a 53-note scale derived from a series of purely tuned perfect fifths and major thirds. (For instance, the two major thirds up from C are E and G#, the two major thirds down from C are A $\flat$  and F $\flat$  – if the thirds are perfectly in tune G# and A $\flat$  are different notes, as are E and F $\flat$ .) The active first movement of the quartet is based on a 12-tone row, whose pitches are shifted microtonally over the course of the movement, giving a sense of what Johnston describes as 'shifting and iridescent' sound. The second movement, which is marked 'Intimate and spacious', features more sustained and consonant intervals, to which the microtones give a certain intensity and shimmer. The last movement is a grinding palindromic movement which has sudden and drastic, if not violent, contrasts of tempi and texture.

Over the course of the 1960s and early 70s, Johnston's music evolved from a more modernist style to one that was simpler and perhaps less abstract. String Quartet No. 3, subtitled *Verging*, written in 1966, is a one-movement work that also uses microtonally shifting serial procedures and makes rapid shifts of texture and mood. It can be played as a self-contained work, or it can be performed with String Quartet No. 4 (1973), subtitled *The Ascent*. This is another single-movement piece, and if performed together – as a work entitled *Crossings* – the two movements are connected by a silence of 60 to 120 seconds (entitled, in this Context, 'The Silence'). String Quartet No. 4 is a set of variations on the American hymn tune *Amazing Grace*, with an ever increasingly complex texture and a movement through three different tuning systems (Pythagorean, triadic just intonation, and an extended just intonation), mimicking through that progress the effect of modulation. This is Johnston's best known and most often performed (and most recorded) work.

The trend towards a simpler and possibly more direct style, which String Quartet No. 4 marks, is intensified and accelerated in String Quartet No. 9 (1988), which evokes a more transparent,

classical manner, which Bob Gilmore's notes describe as an imagining of 'how European music might have developed had it been freed of the constraints of equal temperament'. The most striking movements, perhaps, are the third, a Haydnish slow movement, and the first, a sort of 'intonation', in the early Baroque sense, which over the course of its six-minute duration, consists entirely of the notes of the C major scale (in just intonation) between middle C and the C an octave above it.

Johnston's work concentrates on the beautiful sonorities made possible by tuning intervals exactly according to the overtone series, and the most striking immediate impression made by the music is the pure, rather cool, and concordant quality of its sound. The performances of Kepler Quartet (Sharon Leventhal, Eric Segnitz, Brek Renzelman, and Karl Levine) are luminously sonorous and completely masterly. Two of these quartets have been recorded previously, but neither with anything like the same quality of performance or of sound quality. The further instalments of the cycle are eagerly awaited.

Martin Bresnick, professor of composition at the Yale School of Music, is well known as one of the major teachers of composition in the United States at the present, but his music, which is

concentrated, elegant, rigorous, and quietly Apollonian, is not as widely known as it should be. Unlike his Trio and his wind quintet *Just Time*, which are abstract, absolute music, all of the works on this disc have important extra-musical connexions; the majority have links to various demotic sources and evoke, in one way or another, Bresnick's family's connexion with politically progressive philosophies and movements early on in the 20th century. *Grace*, a concerto for two marimbas and orchestra, has a scenario related to the discussion in Heinrich Kleist's essay 'The Puppet Theatre' of consciousness, volition, and control in relation to mind and body. The manner of this work is close to the above-mentioned trio and quintet in that it develops its compelling form out of abstract but clearly audible palindromic and inversive symmetries. *Tent of Miracles*, for saxophone and recorded saxophones (the work can also be performed by four saxophones; in this performance the distinction between the 'live' soloist and the pre-recording is imperceptible) portrays the futile and eventually abandoned attempts of a master artist, by continual repainting, to remove the smile from the face of a deadly jaguar in one of his paintings, as described in a novel by Brazilian author Jorge Amado. *Songs*

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of the *Mouse People* for cello and percussion evokes in five brief 'arias' Kafka's Josephine, the mouse diva. *Fantasia on a Theme by Willie Dixon* recalls a moment in Bresnick's life in Palo Alto, California, in 1968, when 'a recording I had never heard before ... gradually invaded every neuron of my not so slowly blowing mind'. This is a composed-out Jazz improvisation of ever-increasing fantasy, complexity and grandeur for piano and amplified instruments. *My Twentieth Century*, a setting of a valedictory poem by Tom Andrews, is written in his memory: the text is spoken by different players in the ensemble to the audience and to each other. Although it begins as though it might be some sort of minimalist piece, and proceeds in that way for a while, it develops into something completely different, nostalgic, deep, and beautiful, and having a very specific relationship to its text.

Julius Eastman is likely to be known primarily (possibly only) as the singer on the first recording, by The Fires of London, of Sir Peter Maxwell's Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*. Born in 1940, Eastman grew up in Ithaca, New York. He began college at Ithaca College, but transferred to the Curtis Institute, where he studied composition and piano and from which he graduated in 1966. He joined the Creative Associates at SUNY Buffalo in 1968 and was associated with them for many years, as well as with the migrating New Music America, and the S. E. M. Ensemble. In 1983, after academic disappointments, Eastman's life began to fall apart. He began to drink and smoke crack, and for a while was homeless and living in Tompkins Square Park in New York. After eviction from his apartment, his belongings, including scores of his music, were confiscated by the sheriff's office and possibly lost. He died alone in a hospital in Buffalo, his death unreported to the musical world for about nine months. Even though many of his scores seem to be lost, the composer Mary Jane Leach, through indefatigable effort, was able to locate a number of recordings of Eastman's works, and they have now been released.

The earliest work in this collection is *Stay On It*, written in 1973, for voice, violin, clarinet, two saxophones, percussion and piano. The work begins with a repeating bright, pop-like cadential figure. We have been conditioned by later minimalist pieces to expect a lot of repetition and some sort of gradual transformation; instead the pattern simply abruptly stops and starts again several times, fragmenting, then resumes, slightly altered and changing, but then returns to its original form, overlaid with a sustained but also changing strand of music, which gradually engulfs the cadence pattern. The sustained strand

evolves into controlled improvisation. The pattern occasionally resurfaces, but eventually morphs into a degenerate version of itself, which after a while dies away. The progress of the piece is always unexpected, always interesting, and always invigorating. *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?*, from 1977, for a larger ensemble featuring low brass, is an extended fantasia on the chromatic scale in the 'non-hierarchical form' explored by the S.E.M. Ensemble, described in Kyle Gann's program notes as 'music without beginning, end, or climaxes, in which every part was as important as any other part'.

Eastman's later pieces, from 1979 onward, are composed in what he called 'organic form', in which 'every phrase contains the information of the phrase before it, with the new material gradually added in and the old material gradually removed'. The pieces consists of repeated notes which both mark off a grid in time and supply rhythmic impetus. The evolution of the piling up and dispersal of material in unpredictable ways, as well as the uncannily-timed occasional cessations of activity, militate against any sense of stasis or of repetitiveness, or of sameness from piece to piece. *The Holy Presence of Joan D'Arc*, for ten cellos, evokes a sense of religious ecstasy and vision. It is preceded by an impassioned unaccompanied litany of invocation of saints, sung by Eastman himself. The remaining works *Gay Guerrilla*, *Evil Nigger*, and *Crazy Nigger* reflect, at least in their titles, Eastman's gay and black activism. The performances presented in this set are from a concert of Eastman's music performed by Eastman, Frank Ferko, Janet Kattas, and Patricia Martin at Northwestern University on 16 January 1980 on four pianos. (Apparently, the instrumentation in these pieces could be variable.)<sup>2</sup>

Since a sizeable number of the members of the Northwestern community found the titles offensive, they were not listed on the program; Eastman introduced them in a talk which is also preserved here. All of the pieces are powerfully intense, long-spanned, incantory and visionary statements. *Evil Nigger* and *Crazy Nigger* are both more incessantly active, energetic, and angry in nature. *Gay Guerrilla* at certain moments stops its activity with soaring and heart-stopping effect, and builds cumulatively towards its end by means of highly contrapuntal development of Martin Luther's hymn-tune 'A Mighty Fortress' (*Ein fest' Burg*). All of these works are enthralling; their

<sup>2</sup> Including some of those in this set. A page of the score of *Evil Nigger* can be seen at the American Music Center's New Music Box website at <http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=4411>.

quality is impressive, and their power overwhelming. The thought that most of them came as close as they did to disappearing forever is sobering, and a cause for gratitude to Ms. Leach and to New World Records.

For more about Kyle Gann, see the book review on p. 57 of this issue of *Tempo*. His *Long Night* is a work for three pianos, all three of them played beautifully by the wonderful Sarah Cahill on this recording. *Long Night* is a beautiful and serene work, suggesting the influence of Morton Feldman, with a certain quiet, continuous, and continuously evolving eventfulness. Its progress, like an ever-rolling stream, is sure and steady, and always engaging.

Rodney Lister

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JEREMY DALE ROBERTS: *Winter Music*; *Croquis* (selection); *Oggetti – Omaggio à Morandi*; *Wieglied*; *Layers*; *Hamadryad*. Hiroaki Takenouchi (pno), Dimitri Murrath (vla), Lontano c. Odaline de la Martinez. Lorelt LNT118.

NICHOLAS SACKMAN: *Scorpio*; *Time-piece* (revised 2002); *Cross hands*; *Koi*; Sonata for trombone and piano (revised 1999), Sextet for wind. Fine Arts Brass Quintet and various artists. Metier MSV CD92049.

TOM INGOLDSBY: *Dialogues*; Piano Sonata; Trio (Sonata for Violin, Viola and Piano); *After the Eulogy*. Adam Summerhayes (vln), Bridget Carey (vla), Alan Brown (pno), Catherine Summerhayes (pno), Clive Williamson (pno). Meridian CDE 84534.

'North Star'. Works by HUW WATKINS, DIANA BURRELL, JAMES MACMILLAN, RHIAN SAMUEL, RUTH BYRCHMORE, JOHN HAWKINS, ROBIN HOLLOWAY. Deborah Calland (tpt), William Whitehead (organ). Deux-Elles DXL 1097 ([www.deux-elles.com](http://www.deux-elles.com)).

Berio's influence looms fairly large in the Modernist affiliations of Jeremy Dale Roberts, who turned 70 in 2004, and Nicholas Sackman, who is now in his fifties. In the former's case, it adds spice to that Webernesque cultivation of miniature forms which is featured in Lontano's excellent composer portrait. Members of Lontano play seven of the *Croquis* Jeremy Dale Roberts composed between 1976–80, together with *Winter Music* of 1990, *Layers* of 1995 and *Hamadryad* of 2001. *Croquis* are sketches for string trio written for members of the Arditti Quartet and ranging from the contained expressiveness of 'Chants' to the humorous collage of a 'Quodlibet'. *Winter Music* uses a flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet,

celeste and bells. In his booklet note the composer remarks how problems of register and timbre yielded fresh possibilities of texture and colour, even without the added resonance of crotales and wind-chimes. In *Layers* the woodwind trio and trumpet revisit 'When I am laid in earth' from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. The spiritual debt to Berio is obvious here. Hamadryad refers to an Indian snake, but also to the wood-nymph who, in Greek mythology, died with the tree in which she lived. The ten-minute piece was commissioned by the New Opus Trio of Chicago and scored for an evocative combination of alto flute, viola and guitar.

The solo pieces have a force and a resonance of their own. Boulez-like, Jeremy Dale Roberts regards his recent *Oggetti* for piano as a work in progress (on the recording it runs to 25 minutes). They are the musical equivalent of the patiently created still-life paintings of Giorgio Morandi, famous for his collection of receptacles. The viola piece *Wieglied* celebrates another artist of the 20th century, the Argentinian Mauricio Lasansky. His 'Nazi Drawings' in Iowa inspired an instrumental lullaby which flowers into a lyrical lament before its poignant cessation. The outwardly cool music of Jeremy Dale Roberts – the word 'hermetic' is apposite – occasionally surprises you with its ardour.

Through fruitful associations with such groups as Lontano and the Ardittis, Nicholas Sackman long travelled the Modernist highways. He has since advanced beyond Modernism without renouncing formal rigour or emotional complexities. He declares himself simply 'glad to engage with the virtuosity of performers in an expressive environment where [...] pitch, rhythm and harmony still have some validity'. In practice this results in the exhilarating animation to be found in *Scorpio* (which gives the CD its collective title), *Cross hands* or *Koi*. Although such music is best experienced live, it has been transferred with skill to the present disc. Dating from 1995, *Scorpio* features an encounter in four sections between Matthew Dickinson, the young percussionist who commissioned it, and Mervyn Cooke at the piano. Vibraphone, marimba and glockenspiel are all vital to the slow movement at the heart of the piece. Carla Rees leads the quartet of performers in the 1999 composition *Koi*, which artfully raises the whole flute family above the polite exchanges often associated with the instrument. The Sextet composed the following year recalls in a contemporary idiom the alfresco origins of the classical wind quintet – here reinforced by soprano/alto sax (John Barker). In *Cross hands*, solo pianist Costas

Fotopoulos moves from an arpeggiated Scarlatti-like opening to a violent climax of explosive semiquavers.

*Time-piece* and Sackman's Sonata for Trombone are revised versions of pieces from the 1980s. The first constitutes a reworking designed to be kinder to both players and listeners, without compromising the substance. Simon Hogg, the trombonist of the Fine Arts Brass Quintet, shows off his instrument's versatility in the three-movement Sonata with piano.

Born in 1957, Tom Ingoldsby hails from Toronto and is receiving a growing number of UK performances. He was a rock guitarist before pursuing music as an academic subject in Ontario. Subsequently he studied with Morton Feldman in Buffalo and with Donald Erb at the Cleveland Institute, where his *Dialogues pour violon et piano* was first performed in 1989. Much of his music so far has been for chamber groups (although CD annotator Richard Whitehouse flags *Wave Etchings* of 1994/99 as 'the finest piano concerto [...] in the UK for over a decade'). The multi-sectional Sonata for Violin, Viola and Piano, premièred at St Giles Cripplegate in 1996, and *After the Eulogy* for violin and piano, premièred in London's Purcell Room in 2002, have picked up composition awards. With a duration of nine minutes the Piano Sonata (2003) commissioned by Clive Williamson is relatively compressed. The composer has since completed a companion piece and is planning a third, to be played either separately or as part of a piano trilogy.

On the evidence of these recordings, Ingoldsby has a pronounced dramatic sense which is realized through structure rather than rhetoric: one is constantly eager to discover what comes next. His musical temperament oscillates, easily enough, between a Gershwinian laid-backness and Bergian intensity. As delivered by the present performers, the Sonata for Violin, Viola and Piano comes across as a real tour de force. Meridian's booklet fails to make clear which pianist was involved in the *Dialogues*.

'North Star' features compositions for trumpet and organ commissioned by Deborah Calland. She and organist William Whitehead have also recorded Robin Holloway's twice-revised version of *Canzona and Toccata*, which was written first for solo trumpet and then for two trumpeters. This latest adaptation further exploits the music's harmonic and antiphonal possibilities, and it adds up to one of the most impressive works on the disc. Ex-Holloway pupil Huw Watkins has mastered the technical challenges of the medium in *Three Orations*, in which the 'orations' are linked by interludes for muted trumpet alone. Diana

Burrell's one-movement contribution lends the CD its overall title. Burrell highlights the inherent contrasts between organ and trumpet with idiomatic solo writing for each. On the analogy, perhaps, of the famous 'Last Post', Rhian Samuel's *Threnody with Fanfares* (the last of her Three Pieces for Trumpet and Organ) unites fanfare and lament to memorable effect. In his *Sortie*, John Hawkins injects the trumpeter's virtuosity into an organ piece that is outgoing in two senses.

The duo pieces are complemented by several organ solos. Ruth Burchmore's seemingly diffuse *Into the Silent Land*, composed for the Westminster Cathedral organ, takes its inspiration from Christina Rossetti's 'Remember'. James Mac-Millan's two pieces *White Note Paraphrase* and *Gaudeamus in Loci Pace* delight with characteristic invention. The disc was recorded in Douai Abbey, and the sound is first-class.

Peter Palmer

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BERG Opera: *Lulu*. Lisa Saffer (sop), Susan Parry (mezzo), Robert Hayward (bar), John Graham-Hall (ten), Gwynne Howell (bass), Robert Poulton (bar), Stuart Kale (ten), Anna Burford, Graeme Danby (bass), Alan Oke (ten), Roger Begley (bass), Claire Mitcher (sop), Paul Napier-Burrows (bass), Jane Powell (mezzo), Moira Harris (sop), Toby Stanford-Allen (bar). English National Opera Orchestra c. Paul Daniel. Chandos Opera In English CHAN 3130 (3-CD set).

*Lulu*? On disc in English? Yes, indeed, a studio recording from May 2005 of the critically acclaimed production of three years before which had just been revived last year. And very well it sounds, too, Chandos's 24-bit sound allowing all the detail in Berg's powerful, sometimes dense score to be heard with clarity and – at times – overwhelming immediacy. Indeed, the dynamic range of the recording is huge, from the great climax when Jack the Ripper murders the heroine to the many passages of often softly or part-spoken dialogue. Presenting the opera in English has an obvious and immediate advantage for English-speaking listeners unfamiliar with the German of Berg's original, as it allows them to engage with the action of this 'difficult' opera more directly than would normally be the case. The blistering vernacular of Richard Stokes's translated libretto may offend more conservative ears with its use of the f-word, 'bastard' and the rendition of the Acrobat's repeated exclamation 'Himmel, Tod und Wolkenbruch' (usually rendered as 'Devil, death and damn it all!') as 'Bugger,

bugger, bugger it!', but his use of such phrases is in keeping with the character of the work when staged in a less outwardly shockable age.

Another point to bear in mind about the libretto, printed here in English alone, is where it departs from Berg's original, to tie in with details of ENO's staging. There are many instances, littered throughout the work, for the most part in minor details (such as a reference to the 'Emperor of Timbuktu' rather than the 'Emperor of China'), though a comparison between the Animal Tamer's *Prologue* here (brilliantly delivered by Robert Poulton, who doubles as the Acrobat) and the translation provided in, say, the DG version of Boulez's Paris Opéra recording, shows how much of the devil is in the detail. Yet Berg's expressive purpose is never compromised; in fact it is really rather well served. Less clear, however, is why the accompanying booklet contains prefatory notes in French and Italian. German speakers might obviously be intrigued by a foreign-language performance, but I am bemused why listeners whose first language is neither English nor German would be that interested.

Anja Silja remains, perhaps, the greatest Lulu on disc, an interpretation of unnerving subtlety, steel and vulnerability, magically supported by Christoph von Dohnanyi with Viennese forces, her performance compromised only by being set down before Friedrich Cerha's crucial realization of the final Act was ready. (How did we ever manage to listen to *Lulu* without it?) Teresa Stratas otherwise leads the field: the imposing star of what is undoubtedly the finest original-language recording, ironically made in Paris under Boulez's stern gaze. Lisa Saffer's view of the title role is different, more fragile yet more manipulative, sexier and somehow more human. Her voice, smaller than that of the best of her rivals in this role, suits her take on an elusive character whose true name may not actually be known: Lulu is what her father Schigolch calls her familiarly, while Mignon, Eva and Nelly are pet names invented for her by her various husbands. There is more of the opportunist as well as the victim about Saffer's Lulu than with either Stratas or Silja: her snaring of her long-time patron and lover Dr Schön, here, is as much the result of good timing as to the relentless scheming other versions have implied. It also makes more sense of her subsequent flirtation with Schön's son, Alwa.

ENO's cast are always well focussed, especially Susan Parry as the ever-obsessed, ever-forgiving Countess Geschwitz. Hers is a portrayal both intimate and exposed, believable in a way that Alwa – sung sterlingly by John Graham-Hall – somehow never is (in any version). Robert

Hayward brings dignity to Schön's failings as a man, whether in his misjudgement in unintentionally driving the Painter (an ardent Stuart Kale) to suicide, or in his surrender to Lulu's domination over him. Among the male roles, however, it is Gwynne Howell's Schigolch, who alone of all the major players survives the wrack of his daughter's imploding existence, who impresses most, yet never so far as to steal a scene – which would be out of character. The minor roles are splendidly filled by members of the company with no real weak links; under them all is the splendid contribution from the ENO Orchestra, directed – to, dare I say, perfection – by Paul Daniel. I cannot recall hearing them play better, whether on disc or in the Coliseum itself.

How good then is this *Lulu*? Extremely good, indeed. If not a first choice in the international market because of its use of English, for English-speakers it could be indispensable and deserves no less. Boulez's DG Paris recording remains the benchmark against which all competitors must be graded, for the precision and searing rigour of his interpretation. But Daniel's warmer, sexier, more humane account runs that so close that for me it is a joint first choice. Now, Chandos, when can we have Sir Thomas Allen in *Doktor Faust*?

Guy Rickards

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YORK BOWEN: Viola Concerto in C minor, op.25. CECIL FORSYTH: Viola Concerto in G minor. Lawrence Power (vla), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra c. Martyn Brabbins. Hyperion CDA67546.

BOWEN: Viola Concerto<sup>1</sup>; Viola Sonata No.2 in F major<sup>2</sup>; Melody for the C string, op.51 no.2<sup>2</sup>. Doris Lederer (vla), with <sup>1</sup>Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra c. Paul Polivnick, <sup>2</sup>Bruce Murray (pno). Centaur CRC 2786.

BOWEN: Viola Concerto. WALTON: Viola Concerto in A minor. HOWELLS: *Elegy* for viola, string quartet and string orchestra. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: Suite for viola and orchestra (Group I). Helen Callus (vla), New Zealand Symphony Orchestra c. Marc Taddei. ASV CD DCA 1181.

York Bowen began work on his Viola Concerto in 1906, the year after he had graduated from the Royal Academy of Music. He was then only 22, and already a nationally-recognized composer and concert pianist of marked talent, with a number of important premières of significant early works already under his belt. His first symphony, his first two piano concertos with himself as soloist, and other orchestral works had



been given in recent years at Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts in London, and his music was also played in important provincial music centres around the country like Bournemouth, Eastbourne and Manchester.

Concertos for viola were still very much a novelty at this time. Indeed Bowen's was probably only the second to appear in this country: it was preceded by Cecil Forsyth's concerto (see below), which was first performed at a Queen's Hall Promenade concert on 12 September 1903, played by its dedicatee Emile Férir, and repeated at Bournemouth on 28 March 1907, when it was played by Siegfried Wertheim under Dan Godfrey. Bowen's new concerto was first heard publicly at a Philharmonic Society concert at the Queen's Hall on 26 March 1908, played by its dedicatee Lionel Tertis under conductor Landon Ronald. Tertis continued to perform the work into the 1920s, after which it disappeared from public view. Apparently not heard again until it was revived at the twenty-first International Viola Congress in 1993, it was first published by Josef Weinberger in 1998. An accomplished and appealing work of demanding length (c.36 minutes in performance, though the publisher indicates an optimistic 28), the Bowen Viola Concerto deserves its recent resurrection and publication after such long neglect in virtually total oblivion, and one hopes it may be heard in today's concert halls.

In the meanwhile, remarkably, come three 'première' recordings of the work, made virtually simultaneously and riding on the wave of Bowen popularity currently sweeping the British Music scene. (One likes to think the British Music Society led the way here, with its première recording of the Cello Sonata in 1997, and its best-selling recording of two String Quartets and the Phantasy-Quintet for bass clarinet and string quartet, also world premières, released in 2002.) First off the mark, recording in Dundee in mid-November 2004, were Hyperion, who were followed a week later by Centaur in Prague, and three months later by ASV in Wellington, New Zealand.

Either of the first two of these releases, as listed above, is highly recommendable, both in terms of professional performance and recorded sound (though there are one or two audible edit points in the Centaur recording). Lawrence Power is a player of first-rate virtuoso calibre, in the William Primrose tradition. His instrumental sound is rather more 'alto-violin' than 'echt-violin' overall, and for that reason alone may possibly be somewhat less than totally alluring to the ears of viola buffs not completely swayed by the

technical accomplishment on display. Doris Lederer plays with a warm, natural musicality which is echoed in the orchestral accompaniment provided her by the Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra – a performance style which for many listeners might well tip the balance of favour in her direction.

Choice of coupling could conceivably sway the final preference. Power plays the Cecil Forsyth concerto of 1903, which rather inexplicably was ignored by Lionel Tertis throughout his illustrious career. It is an attractive work, distinguished as probably the first real viola concerto in existence. Perhaps more conventional in general expression than the Bowen, and belonging more obviously to the late nineteenth century in feeling, it is notable for its dramatic opening flourish and memorable main themes. Doris Lederer offers Bowen's rather too domestically-conceived Second Viola Sonata, in a fine performance which complements her other solo recordings of Bowen, including the First Viola Sonata, found elsewhere on the Centaur label. (She has also recorded, for the same label, the sonatas of Bax and Bliss; and one hopes she may now turn her attention to Benjamin Dale.)

As for the recording by Helen Callus, it is regrettably placed out-of-court on two immediate counts, despite some attractive, lyrical playing: the third and last movement of the Bowen is grievously cut by a full third (some 370 bars, including all of the development section, together with the second subject from the exposition and the first subject from the recapitulation!); and Ms Callus substitutes her own, cliché-ridden cadenza for Bowen's original, which sounds far more difficult in execution and was undoubtedly much influenced by Tertis himself in its composition. Her coupling is very generous in length (which may explain the disastrous decision to cut the Bowen finale), but there are finer alternative performances of the superb Walton concerto readily available, and the Vaughan Williams piece can be found complete elsewhere (here only the First Group is given – three movements of an eight-movement suite).

John Talbot

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ROREM: Flute Concerto; Violin Concerto; *Pilgrims* for strings. Philippe Quint (vln), Jeffrey Khaner (fl), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra c. José Serebrier. Naxos American Classics 8.559278.

ROREM: *The Auden Songs*<sup>1</sup>; *The Santa Fe Songs*<sup>2</sup>. <sup>1</sup>Christopher Lemmings (ten), <sup>2</sup>Sara Fulgoni (mezzo-sop), Chamber Domäne. Black Box BBM 1104.

ROREM: Works for Choir and Organ. Harvard University Choir dir. Murray Forbes Somerville with Carson Cooman (organ). Black Box BBM 1102.

Yes ... this new Naxos CD will turn out to be one of the high points of the American Classics Series, which is doing the right thing by Ned Rorem who has continued to show that the years have enriched and empowered his creative genius. This magnificent release, following on from the recording of the symphonies in 2003 (8.559149), alights on three eras: the 1958 *Pilgrims* for strings is a rapt poem of enchanting loveliness. There is something about this sort of piece which sets it apart from everything else: a sort of intimate communion between the composer and the players and listeners which draws you right in to the music. There are many other examples of this template that I can think of but Rorem's short essay here is the closest to the perfection of shared empathy I have experienced.

The Violin Concerto, from a quarter of a century later, is a very different piece, forthright in many ways but knowing and sometimes angry, petulant and tender, fervent and then wistful. Rorem had at this time written an Organ Concerto (a brilliant work, well overdue for recording), and a large piece entitled *An American Oratorio*, one of his big song-cycles with orchestra with texts from the golden age of American poetry. He was thinking in terms of big canvases in the mid 1980s, perhaps his own golden age, which also saw the very successful Symphony for Strings (actually his fourth). Anyway the Violin Concerto, recorded by Bernstein shortly before his death with Gidon Kremer, is heard here in what I think is a much more faithful reading with many nuances and deeply-felt interludes that were too readily glossed over and blanked out last time. Like most Rorem concertos the preferred format is sequential rather than symphonic and the core of the music lies in its intimate exploration of mood. The whole piece is a progressive nocturne, a sort of 'From Dusk to Dawn'. The heart of it is a graceful elegy, 'Midnight'.

The Flute Concerto (2002) will in my view soon join the front rank of American works for this instrument: only Gould, Diamond, Piston and La Montaine are generally known but Corigliano, Joan Tower and Ellen Taafé Zwilich have also weighed in. Perhaps the really big unknown American Flute Concerto was Peter Mennin's last work (1982). Rorem's eloquence unerringly finds its mark in this sequence of mood-poems and occasional intermezzos (they would grace any occasion: listen to the simple

'hymn' followed by the café-waltz). And the plaintive 'Resumé and Prayer'. In his 80s Rorem is still looking to give new voice to his art, and moreover he knows exactly what he wants and has every tool to hand to deliver it. Some of the work was written at Yaddo, the artist's colony in upstate New York, which Rorem has often visited, but any connexions with the past are aesthetic rather than nostalgic.

*The Auden Songs* (1989), an assembly of seven of some of WH Auden's most familiar verse, is an enduring quest to leaven dark thoughts with mellowness and a more reflective musical medium. That is not to say that the rawness of some of Auden's words is cushioned ... you only have to listen to 'Yes, we are going to suffer' to sense the added weight of angst Rorem brings to bear. The same can be said of the long opening number 'The Shield of Achilles', which clatters with rage amidst the more meditative interludes. But Rorem is a master seamster and weaves his magic thread through the most fragmented and despairing *cris du coeur*. At last, in the final Nocturne, some repose is found only to fall apart in the closing couplet. Rorem proves himself more than equal to the challenge of such difficult lines. I like the choice of soloists and especially the brittle timbre of Christopher Lemmings' tenor which, seemed especially apt. *The Santa Fe Songs* (1980) inhabit a less disturbed terrain and Rorem is happy to indulge us with his bitter-sweet responses to the verse of the New Mexican poet, Witter Bynner. This is the vintage Rorem of *Poems of Love and the Rain*, where he loves the quirky lines and almost bric-à-brac incongruity of the collection. 'He never knew what was the matter with him, until one night he chopped up his bed for firewood' is soon followed by a hymn to water hyacinths! And the velvety texture of the mezzo-soprano, the gentle, chiming *ostinati* and scurrying strings: sensual not cerebral.

A CD devoted entirely to Rorem's church and organ music is especially welcome. The organist Murray Somerville emigrated from this country to the USA some years ago and he has presented us with some unusual and unknown Rorem pieces as well as the more familiar *Arise, Shine* and *Three Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, now well-established in the cathedral repertoire. I was especially taken with two early works: the 1948 *A Sermon on Miracles* (text by one of his favourite poets, Paul Goodman), a sort of six-minute church opera-oratorio, and the even earlier *Seventieth Psalm* (1943 – written at the age of 19). Those early clear waters, untainted by experience, influence and diffidence, are already flowing sweetly but surely. Two other anthems,

*Mercy and Truth are Met and Come, Pure Hearts*, deserve to be better known. Rorem's substantial contribution to the church music genre is by no means yet fully explored but this is an excellent start, despite the slightly boxy acoustic.

It's easy to fall into clichés but these discs really are things to treasure. In 2006, if our senses haven't been overwhelmed in five minutes, we're expected to switch off. And if they have been we're not expected to listen any longer. Thank goodness for Ned Rorem, who draws us so gently and yet so totally into a world of song and beauty and of timeless and untroubled elegance. Need one say more?

Bret Johnson

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ARTHUR BUTTERWORTH: Piano Trios 1 and 2<sup>1</sup>; Viola Sonata<sup>2</sup>. <sup>1</sup>Raphael Terroni (pf), <sup>1</sup>John Trusler (vln), <sup>1</sup>Fiona Murphy (vlc), <sup>2</sup>Morgan Goff (vla). Dutton Epoch CDLX 7164

Though commissioned for the 1983 Cheltenham Festival, Arthur Butterworth's Piano Trio No.1 suggests a response to some genuine inner compulsion. In three linked movements, its harmonic language has an affinity with the modal inflections and pastoral spirit of Sibelius's Sixth Symphony. Inspired by the contemplation in winter of past spring times and summers, the work particularly recalls a radiant summer evening crossing the Baltic.

The Terroni Piano Trio captures the joyous mood of the *Vigoroso* opening theme, a lilting, long-breathed melody in swinging 6/4 time with stringed instruments riding on the crest of the piano's wave-like broken chords. A further important thematic motif takes the form of repeated octaves under a steadily descending chromatic melodic line. A stormy *tremolando* sequence displays a Sibelian mystical energy, but the movement ends in tranquillity, becalmed on a long-held C pedal note in the piano.

A mood of introspective nostalgia permeates the *Adagio*. The central section features impressive solos for each instrument, climaxing in a striking sequence of descending harmonics in the first violin. The *Allegretto con moto* Finale appears to leave the reflections of the *Adagio* far behind with its lively chattering staccatos, yet it ends in hushed serenity, dying away to nothing. In fact all three movements end in a fading *pianissimo*, lending the work an elegiac, contemplative character. The pinnacle of Arthur

Butterworth's works for chamber forces, this Piano Trio is one of his most accomplished and satisfying achievements in any medium and the players on this disc have the full measure of it.

Along with Butterworth's Viola Concerto, his Baxian Viola Sonata (op. 78) represents a significant contribution to the instrument's repertoire. A deft marrying of fantasia-like freedom and freely adapted sonata form, the substantial first movement is eloquent and atmospheric; perfectly suited to the viola's dark tones, it gives the pianist almost equal billing in terms of thematic significance and dramatic tension. A brief Puckish central scherzo precedes a deeply inward-looking Finale marked *Lento, penserosamente*, containing some of the most heartfelt utterances in the composer's output. The sonata ends with a hint at the opening of Ralph Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony, a favourite work of Butterworth; this concluding reference confirms the Viola Sonata as one of his most personal creations.

The Second Piano Trio nearly matches its predecessor in invention, lyricism and expressive intensity. The ebullient *Appassionato* first movement, which bursts in with tremendous energy, and the introspective central *Adagio* both have a rich Brahmsian glow. The exuberant Finale is influenced by what the composer describes in his programme note as an 'exhilarating *cor de chasse*', a hunting image to be found in other recent Butterworth works such as *Acteon's Ride* for woodwind ensemble and the Finale of the *Sinfonia Concertante* for brass. The Terroni Piano Trio display a delightful lightness of touch in this fresh and spirited piece, especially in the outer movements, which irresistibly carries the listener along.

All three pieces on this superbly played and recorded CD prove Arthur Butterworth's ability to apply his naturally epic mode of expression to chamber forces. Dutton deserve congratulations for being the first to present them on disc in such authentic and committed performances from the Terroni Trio and viola player Morgan Goff. The composer's large-scale pieces such as the Viola, Cello and Guitar Concertos and Symphonies 2–6 urgently need recording and I hope Dutton will turn their attention to these unconscionably neglected major orchestral works. In the meantime, we have here the pick of Butterworth's chamber music; the intimacy of the medium gives rise to some of his most confessional, intuitive and emotionally involved writing.

Paul Conway

FARKAS: Serenade for woodwind quintet; *Quattro Pezzi* for double bass and woodwind; *Gyümölcskosár* ('Fruit Basket'); *Old Hungarian Dances of the 17th Century*; *Rondo capriccio*; *Lavottiana*. Ulrike Schneider (mezzo-sop), Daniel Dodds (vln), Dieter Lange (db), Phoebus Quintet. Toccata Classics TOCC 0019.

This first encounter with a Toccata Classics product has whetted the appetite for more. Ferenc Farkas's music is both as accomplished and as readily accessible to the listener as that of his fellow-Hungarian Kodály, 23 years his senior. The young wind players of the Phoebus Quintet revel in the refined colours and rhythms of Farkas's best-known work, the *Antiche danze ungheresi del 17. secolo*. What makes the CD of particular interest, however, is the first recording of *Gyümölcskosár*, a cycle of twelve 'nursery songs' composed in 1980 on poems by the 20th-century writer Sándor Weöres. Here is that penchant for the lyrical miniature one also finds in Farkas's former pupil Kurtág (who completed his *Attila József Fragments* around the same time). Given the

riches of a Weöres lyric like the eleventh – a tiny Magyar *Pierrot lunaire* – Farkas is quite right to say that the texts will appeal to adults as much as children, and this is true of his musical settings as well. Fantasy, atmosphere and knockabout humour abound. Although various alternative accompaniments are available, the singer and wind quintet in this performance sound beautifully matched. Ulrike Schneider has the wide vocal range required, with a fitting lucidity at the top of her compass.

Also recorded for the first time is Farkas's *Rondo capriccio* for violin and wind quintet. Composed for violin and piano in 1957, it was rewritten two years later. After hearing the piece I was not surprised by the statement: 'In my own way I have made use of serial technique'. Helpfully, Martin Anderson touches on this subject in the CD booklet, noting that Farkas often cited Frank Martin and Dallapiccola as models. Of the disc's other works, the five-movement *Lavottiana* should attract any wind group who care for the *Old Hungarian Dances*.

Peter Palmer

## NEW CD releases: Takemitsu and Wuorinen

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*conductor*  
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October release

### Charles Wuorinen

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A Reliquary for Igor  
Stravinsky

Oliver Knussen  
*conductor*

SINF CD4-2006  
November release

'Knussen conducted the Sinfonietta in a superb first British performance of *Arc*'  
*The Guardian* (1998)

'Knussen depicted its kaleidoscopic vision with brilliant assurance' *The Guardian* on the world premiere of *Cyclops 2000*

[www.londonsinfonietta.org.uk/cds](http://www.londonsinfonietta.org.uk/cds)

SESSIONS: String Quintet; Canons (to the memory of Stravinsky); 6 Pieces for solo cello; String Quartet No 1 in E minor. The Group for Contemporary Music. Naxos 8.559261.

Roger Sessions was not a prolific composer; he created a little over 40 works in all, with a handful for chamber groups. This Naxos reissue of Koch's pioneering release from 1994 contains the bulk of it, with just the Second String Quartet and two violin Duos<sup>3</sup> missing. The String Quintet (1958–9) was one of the first fruits of Sessions's late period. It is cast in three movements: the outer ones are both sonata designs, though the first has three expositions, a structural device suggested by Beethoven's op. 132 Quartet – although it is a moot point whether that has three expositions or a double recapitulation. It was a design that had long fascinated Sessions, for the opening *Tempo moderato* of his First Quartet (1936; the back cover is in error listing the date as two years later) which concludes this disc was also consciously modelled on the Beethoven. Another connexion between the two Sessions works – and, indeed, the Beethoven – is that their central spans are long visionary adagios. Throughout both works Sessions's innate lyricism and gift for extended lines are the lifeblood of his expression, yet there is never any feeling that the music is even a note too long.

The Quintet, composed unlike the Quartet in Sessions's mature dodecaphonic style, is without doubt the toughest listen on the disc but is immensely rewarding to get to know. The brief *Canons (to the memory of Stravinsky)* for string quartet has a special relationship to this magazine since it was one of a series of works commissioned in 1971 to mark Stravinsky's death on 6 April that year and printed in *Tempo* in 1972. A muted, beautiful miniature, it shares something of the atmosphere of the Quintet's central *Adagio ed espressivo*. The principle of dialogue shared by these three works persists also into the suite of Six Pieces for solo cello Sessions wrote for his son in 1966, the second movement being an imaginary 'friendly conversation' conducted between father and son. Sadly, Andrea Olmstead's original notes have been edited down for this reissue, losing a vignette of Sessions family life:

Let's say I start to talk about a certain subject – I couldn't tell you what we'd be talking about – and then my son comments at some length, and I say, 'But...' (My daughter [Elizabeth] used to say, when she was a little girl, 'I hate that word – but'.)

The performances are committed and well-prepared and if Joshua Gordon's playing could be a little lighter in mood in the Six Pieces, the ensemble pieces impress in bringing out the rigour and fantasy of Sessions's music. No remastering credit is given by Naxos but their pressing seems to play a tad more brightly and loudly than the Koch original. Recommended.

Guy Rickards

Rapsodi: Albanian piano music Volume 2. Kirsten Johnson (pno). Guild GMCD 7300.

It was three years ago that Kirsten Johnson's first exemplary CD of Albanian piano was issued by Guild. All of that music was completely new to me (and probably to all but a few other listeners), as is the music on this second volume, but some of the same composers' names re-appear. The older generation of Ibrahim and Harapi, Kozma Lara and Sokoli are represented, as is the newer name of Papadhimitri (b.1948). Amongst the elder composers – that is, those born just after the end of the 1914–1918 war – we can hear how profound was French influence before the Iron Curtain came down on Albanian music. Ibrahim's *Waltz* and Harapi's *Sonatina* particularly show a French neo-classical influence combined with late 19th-century *bravura* style (apparent in much of this Albanian music) that is wholly engaging. According to Ms Johnson's excellent notes, Ibrahim was often taken to task by the League of Artists and Writers for his use of pulsating rhythms, fragmentation of melodies and unconventional harmonic resolutions that went way beyond the bounds of Hoxha-approved social realism. By decree, all the composers had to make use of folk elements in their work: when Ibrahim met Kirsten Johnson in 1995 in Tirana he told her that he had to 'shield his true intentions as a composer' by using such elements. The results make for interesting listening.

The equivocal but charming Satie-like *Waltz* by Tish Daija (composer of the first Albanian string quartet in 1953) somehow seems to have eluded the censors. The music in Johnson's programme is not all serious: Alberto Paparisto's *Scherzo and Dance* is full of surprises, even humorous. Like many of these composers Kozma Lara (b.1931)

<sup>3</sup> One with piano from 1942 and the other with cello from 1978, both issued on Koch 3-7153-2 with the Unaccompanied Violin Sonata.

studied at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in the 1950s and has composed huge quantities of piano music including five piano concertos, four rhapsodies for piano and orchestra, sonatas, heroic ballades and much more. I found much of his music rather overblown for my taste and too rhetorical, and felt much the same for the *Albanian Rhapsody No.2* by Sokoli (b.1920). The music works best when it is unaffected, simple but with dynamic contrasts of rhythm and melody, the finest aspects of the folk music. But then, if we all had to work within the confines of institutional censorship as these composers did, we too might have cast aesthetic preferences aside in order to survive. This is an enjoyable CD and beautifully played by Ms Johnson.

Raymond Head

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FRITZ BRUN: Symphony No. 9; *Aus dem Buch Hiob* (*Symphonische Dichtung*). Moscow Symphony Orchestra c. Adriano. Guild GMCD 7306.

SCHOECK: String Quartet No. 2 in C major. FRITZ BRUN: String Quartet No. 3 in F major. Amar Quartett. Musiques Suisses MGB CD 6238.

HANS SCHAEUBLE: String Quartet op.19. MEINRAD SCHÜTTER: String Quartet. ERICH SCHMID: String Quartet op. 4. casalQUARTETT Zurich. Guild GMCD 7303.

There are symphonic cycles on CD featuring several neglected 20th-century British composers. A similar project devoted to Switzerland's foremost symphonist – only three of whose ten symphonies have been published – was long overdue. In his lifetime Fritz Brun (1878–1959) found champions in his Swiss conducting colleague Volkmar Andreae and in Hermann Scherchen, an outspoken judge if there ever was one. But Brun's persistence in making time for composition, even before his retirement from the concert podium, was not accompanied by a talent for self-promotion, and his last works coincided with the onrushing tide of Modernism. Others have gone before Adriano in committing a Fritz Brun symphony to CD: there are two such recordings of the Second. But Adriano's intention of recording the complete set reflects just the whole-hearted advocacy that was needed.

In his booklet notes Adriano describes the Ninth as Brun's magnum opus. The received opinion, however, is that Brun reacted to the precedent of Beethoven with an atypically lighter work: a prelude, in fact, to the weightier Tenth. This view, I suspect, is largely correct. Brun's

hour-long Eighth Symphony has an underlying 'programme' connected to the times of the day. In his Ninth, the programme is indicated through the following five movement headings: 'Vorspiel', 'Serenade', 'Liebesruf', 'Im Kreis der Freunde' and 'Glaube und Zweifel – Lob Gottes und der Natur'. The key is a pastoral F major, and the symphony ends benignly. The finale, at 15 minutes, comprises one third of the whole. Dramatic and complex, it presents almost a tone poem in itself. Regarding this finale, Brun quoted some poignant lines from a poem by Matthias Claudius, 'Die Sternseherin Lise'. In its breadth the movement invites comparison with the first movement of Brun's Third Symphony (reviewed in *Tempo* Vol. 59 No. 233, pp. 80–2) or the *Largo e mesto* movement of his String Quartet in F.

The second most substantial portion of Brun's Ninth is the central *Andante sostenuto*, for which the first two movements pave the way. Here the listener is reminded of the impassioned slow movement of Brun's Second Symphony. The fourth movement vividly portrays one of those convivial artistic gatherings in which Othmar Schoeck figured prominently in his earlier years. A quarrel breaks out; someone assuages it with a melody from Flotow's opera *Martha*, and the group eventually disperses with a burst of 'Gaudemus igitur'.

As Fritz Brun's orchestral oeuvre is gradually disinterred, so his melodic gifts, his harmonic resourcefulness and singular handling of polyphonic textures become more and more striking. How early in Brun's career these powers began to develop is illustrated by Adriano's compelling account of a 1906 symphonic poem inspired by the Book of Job. What surprises is not the influence of Beethoven, Brahms or Bruckner but – repeated listening confirms this – the stylistic independence that Brun's music was already displaying. Further pieces of a fascinating jigsaw are eagerly awaited.

Brun composed his String Quartet No. 3 in F major (another unpublished work) in 1943, six years before commencing the Ninth Symphony. Two years earlier he had retired as music director of the Berne Symphony Orchestra and settled permanently in Morcote on Lake Lugano. Like the symphonies, Brun's quartets combine structural rigour with unmistakable evocations of man and nature. The Third Quartet is characteristic in its lyrical radiance, the positively rude contrasts of the second movement (*Allegro appassionato*) and the finale's subtle interplay of light and shade. The aforementioned *Largo* shows an appreciation of string sonorities which is also to be found in Brun's Variations on an Original Theme for piano and

string orchestra. I must, however, agree with Willi Schuh that the density of the writing occasionally strains the quartet medium. For all the collective skill and insight of the Amar Quartett (the youthful successors to Hindemith's original chamber team of that name), there are stretches where they seem under pressure.

The Amars are wholly at home with Schoeck's five-movement String Quartet in C of 1923, bringing out its rhythmic complexities with far more assurance than the Minguet Quartett in a recording of ten years ago. This is among the best of Schoeck's purely instrumental compositions.

Silly typography notwithstanding, the young players of the *casalQUARTETT* are fast establishing a name for themselves. They make excellent musical sense of a shortish free-tonal piece (1990/96) by the prolific Hindemith pupil Meinrad Schütter, who died in January 2006 aged 95. Eclectic though Schütter undoubtedly was – see *Tempo* 218, p. 56 – he produced an oeuvre to be reckoned with. More firmly wedded to serial technique is the op.4 of Erich Schmid, composed when this distinguished Swiss conductor was studying with Schoenberg in Berlin, and revised several years later. The three movements bear the sub-title 'In modo classico'. Easily the most expansive of Guild's three '20th Century Swiss String Quartets', Hans Schaeuble's op.19 was similarly composed in Berlin during the 1930s. The highly engaging five-movement work has G major as its tonal centre and derives unity from the introduction's return in the extended finale. For some time I couldn't identify the composer whose melodic and rhythmic fingerprints the music reminded me of, until I came to the startled realization it was Britten. The resemblances may be superficial, but the fine creative confidence on display here contrasts with the loss of nerve Schaeuble suffered after returning to Switzerland for good.

Peter Palmer

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CYRIL SCOTT: Piano Concerto No.1<sup>1</sup>; Symphony No.4; *Early One Morning*. <sup>1</sup>Howard Shelley (pno), BBC Philharmonic c. Martyn Brabbins. Chandos CHAN 10376.

SCOTT: Complete Piano Music Volume One – Suites and Miniatures. Leslie De'Ath, Cyril Scott (pnos). Dutton Epoch CDLX 7150 (2-CD set).

SCOTT: Complete Piano Music Volume Two – Complete Piano Sonatas. Leslie De'Ath (pno). Dutton Epoch CDLX 7155.

SCOTT: Complete Piano Music Volume Three – Concert Pieces, Ballet Scores, Unpublished Works, Two-piano Works. Leslie De'Ath, Anya Alexeyev (pnos). Dutton Epoch CDLX 7166 (2-CD set).

SCOTT: Sonata op.66; Second Sonata; Sonata III; *Sphinx* op.63; *Rainbow Trout*; *Rondeau de Concert*; *Ballad*; *Victorian Waltz*. Michael Schäfer (pno). Genuin GEN 85049.

It is odd to remember that there was a time, long ago, when Cyril Scott was probably the best-known British composer on the Continent, and was generally considered 'the English Debussy'. More than half his career was spent in the obscurity that generally envelops figures considered to have missed the boat, stylistically speaking; with the result that his later music – which in fact shows considerable powers of self-development and retrenchment – received virtually no exposure of any kind. After post-humous decades in the critical doldrums, he finally seems to be receiving proper attention on record, with an orchestral series on Chandos (the first volume was reviewed by David Babcock in *Tempo* Vol.59, No.233), cycles of piano and chamber music on Dutton, and now a disc from the German label Genuin. It begins to be possible to understand something of what so impressed Scott's contemporaries.

The second release in Chandos's orchestral series is entirely up to the technical and musical standards of the first. John Ogdon recorded the First Piano Concerto (1913–14) and *Early One Morning* (1930–31) for Lyrita, ages ago, but those sterling accounts have long been unavailable,<sup>4</sup> so it's good to resume the works' acquaintance in these beautifully recorded and equally eloquent performances by Howard Shelley. *Early One Morning*, a dream-like ramble upon the eponymous folksong, is one of Scott's loveliest scores; while the Concerto, with its chunkily slithering chromatic chordal writing, shimmeringly evocative slow movement and invigoratingly 'neo-Handelian' finale is a true virtuoso vehicle located somewhere on a line connecting Grainger and Sorabji.

The Fourth Symphony was composed in 1951–52, by which time Scott was in his early seventies, and it shared the fate of most of his late works: few people even knew of its existence, and in fact it was never performed before Chandos made this recording of it. A little like Bax in Sibelian mood, but with a flavour all its own, it

<sup>4</sup> Nimbus have recently announced that they have acquired, and intend to re-release in full, the Lyrita catalogue.

proves a concise, emotionally elusive four-movement work with plenty of the orchestral 'sea-imagery' observable in Scott's orchestral works of the 1930s. Unlike the extroverted Piano Concerto, there are few big climaxes, rather a subtle, atmospheric exploration of mood with haunting moments of stillness, especially in the hypnotic slow movement. It is, indeed, just the kind of work that benefits from repeated hearings. Martyn Brabbins directs sympathetic and characterful performances, skilfully delineating the colourful stands in Scott's often complex orchestral web. The disc is well worth any British music-lover's time.

Our patchy current state of knowledge of Scott is mirrored in the two separate discs under review that proclaim themselves to be his 'Complete Piano Sonatas'. Michael Schäfer's Genuin CD, a co-production with Bavarian Radio, contains three such works, from 1909, 1932 and 1966: Volume Two of Leslie De'Ath's survey of Scott's piano music for Dutton has four. The odd sonata out is the unnumbered 'pre-First' D major work of 1901, a turbulent single-movement piece which Scott withdrew but which Percy Grainger reissued in 1909 under the title *Handelian Rhapsody*, after an editing process that discarded half of it. (De'Ath plays that version, little though it has to do with Handel, in Dutton's Volume One.) De'Ath's three volumes to date comprise five CDs; with Schäfer making a sixth, they contain between them 97 different pieces or movements. Yet this is not even half Scott's total piano output.

De'Ath knows an impressive amount about Scott, as his erudite and informative liner notes attest, and he clearly loves the music to distraction. But in the sonatas, where direct comparison is possible, I preferred Schäfer's more focussed approach. The music ranges from the frankly trivial or salony (rather a lot of De'Ath's Volume One) to the imposing (the Sonatas, or the huge fugue that concludes the *Deuxième Suite*) and the powerfully evocative (eg the dreamlike *Sphinx* of

1908, offered by both pianists). But the idiom, with its hothouse blend of Scriabinesque chromaticism with Debussian impressionism, 'Australian' (as Grainger insisted) metrical freedoms, and 'Frankfurt Gang' added-note chord-sequences striding up and down the hill, rank on rank, isn't easy to digest in bulk. Scott chastened his language considerably, later, but there's not much late piano music here to place alongside the Fourth Symphony (though Schäfer plays a delicious *Victorian Waltz* he wrote aged 83).

De'Ath, whose instincts are to privilege each chord, doesn't make digestion easier, and it's possible to wonder if his tempi aren't generally too laboured. Schäfer has a cleaner sound and is much more dynamic and forward-thrusting, making his performance of the compact and purposeful Second Sonata maybe the most thrilling thing on all these discs. That work (which was championed by Giesecking, no less) dates from the mid-1930s, evidently one of Scott's strongest periods: so does the excellent 2-piano *Theme and Variations*. Partnered here by Anya Aexeyev on disc 1 of Volume Three, De'Ath seems sharper in attack, and some of the best playing (and best work) is four-handed, including some delightful and unexpected Bach arrangements.

But the best pianism of all is the composer's, represented by the valuable crop of 'historical recordings' offered in Volume One: eight works recorded for Columbia between 1928 and 1930. As a player Scott is almost De'Ath's opposite: quick, light of touch, indifferent as only a composer can be to the seductions of momentary sensation, but deft and incisive in characterization. His *Rainbow Trout* easily trumps Schäfer's, and I've never heard *Danse nègre* taken at such headlong pace. This is reason enough to buy Dutton's Volume One; and you don't have to be an English Music fanatic to decide you probably need the other volumes, and Schäfer too, if only to pick and choose the plums at leisure.

Calum MacDonald